DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

July 25, 1969

(17)

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Investigation of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico

1. While serving as Political Officer in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City from 1964 to 1967, I became quite friendly with the Mexican playright, Elena Garro de Paz. An intelligent, witty, and outspoken woman, I found her a very useful if sometimes biased source of political gossip and personal history on significant Mexican personalities. She introduced my wife and me to many important people in Mexico. She was also particularly knowledgeable about agrarian affairs. A biographic report that I prepared on her on May 3, 1966 is attached (Tab A).

2. On one occasion, Miss Garro inadvertently mentioned to me that she had been at a party with Lee Harvey Oswald and two American companions when Oswald was in Mexico just before the Kennedy assassination. The party had been at the home of her cousin, Ruben Duran. The memorandum of that conversation, dated December 10, 1965, is attached (Tab B). I had not read the Warren Report, but I assumed that if Oswald had been to such a party in Mexico, it would have been well known to the Embassy. I also knew Miss Garro to be something of a professional anti-communist who tended to see a communist plot behind any untoward political event. However, the episode about her being escorted into hiding at an obscure hotel intrigued me. Accordingly, I decided to report the matter in writing. I gave the memorandum of conversation limited distribution within the Embassy, and did not send any copies to Washington.

3. A few days later I was called to the office of Mr. Winston Scott, who headed the Embassy's Political Research Section. Also present was Mr. Nathan Ferris, the Embassy's Legal Attache. They had noted with interest my December 10 memorandum of conversation. They pointed out that there had been a great many rumors about Oswald at the time of the assassination and that some could not be verified and others had proved false. They asked me, however, to try and get a more detailed replay of Miss Garro's story. Mr. Scott made clear that the FBI had full responsibility for any further investigations of the Oswald case.

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4. In a memorandum of conversation dated December 25, 1965 (Tab C), I provided a much more detailed and accurate restatement of Miss Garro's alleged encounter with Oswald and subsequent developments. Certain errors in my original presentation were corrected. Miss Garro guessed that the date of the party at her cousin's house was in early September, 1963. She admitted that she had gone to the Embassy to report briefly about this matter on an earlier occasion.

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5. I got no reaction to the second memorandum from Messrs. Scott and Ferris. However, the Deputy Chief of Mission, Clarence Boonstra, who had been Charge d' Affaires at the time of the Kennedy assassination and subsequent Oswald investigation, told me that Oswald had not been in Mexico on the date given for the party. He stated, furthermore, that the informant had changed her story. When I explained that she hadn't changed her story but that rather I now had given a more accurate account of it, he reiterated that the date was wrong and seemed to dismiss the whole affair.

6. Some time later, Elena Garro told me she had found her old calendar and had reconstructed the date of the party at which she had seen Oswald. She stated it had been in late September rather than early September. (Oswald was in Mexico from September 26 to October 3, 1963.) I accordingly went to Mr. Ferris' office and informed him of this. He replied that she had given the late September date accurately when she had come to the Embassy and made her original report to the FBI. He added, however, that someone who was at the party had stated that there were no Americans there. He did not reveal who had provided this information. I asked Mr. Ferris to tell me frankly if he thought I should continue pursuing this matter. He advised me that it was not necessary since he considered the Oswald case closed, stating again the he had heard all these rumors before.

7. Although the date of the alleged party had been placed in the proper time frame, I was puzzled at the report that there had been no Americans at the party. I had assumed that Miss Garro could have clearly been mistaken about the identity of the Americans she saw there, but never doubted that she had seen some Americans. Although, I had met Elena Garro's sister, Deva Guerrera, I had never discussed the Oswald case with her. Mrs. Guerrero's grown-son, however, told me that he was quite convinced that his mother had seen Oswald.

8. Although I pursued the matter no further, I felt obligated nevertheless to report in writing the developments described in the memorandum of conversation dated July 13, 1966 (Tab D). I thought it was particularly strange that the Cuban Government would carry as Miss Garro's address the small hotel where she was allegedly hidden away after the Kennedy assassination by a man identified with the Mexican Ministry of Interior. I should perhaps add that it was I, rather than Miss Garro, who first noticed the address. At the least, the letters lend some cross confirmation to her story about the small hotel. At the most, they provide a source of endless speculation about conspiracy and international intrigue.

9. In early 1967, in the context of the Garrison investigation of the Oswald case. which had opened in New Orleans, Allen White made an interesting comment to me about the investigation of Oswald's activities in Mexico. He stated that the DSF (the security police attached to the Ministry of Interior) had interrogated the

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Durans after the assassination about a party which Oswald had reportedly attended, but that the transcript of the interrogation was entirely unsatisfactory by normal investigatory standards. Furthermore, the party inquired about was not the one at Ruben Duran's house, reported by Elena Garro, but at an entirely different place. This transcript may well be the source of Mr. Ferris' belief that Elena Garro's story had been checked out and found to be untrue.

10. It would appear that whereas the FBI has discounted the Elena Garro allegations, the CIA is still considerably disturbed by them. The CIA may not have pressed for further investigation, however, for a number of reasons: 1) considering the sensitive overlap and subtle competition between two intelligence collecting agencies, it had to yield to the FBI's clear jurisdiction; 2) there are obvious complications in conducting such an investigation in a foreign country: [B1, EC+] Under the circumstances it is unlikely that any further investigation of this matter will ever take place unless it is ordered by a high official in Washington.

11. If all the allegations in the attached memoranda were true, they would not, in themselves, prove that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. However, if they were ever made public, those who have tried to discredit the Warren Report could have a field day in speculating about their implications. The credibility of the Warren Report would be damaged all the more if it were learned that these allegations were known and never adequately investigated by the competent American authorities.

12. Reference is made again to the biographic report (Tab A) on Elena Garro. She is hardly an ordinary or average person. Her strengths and weaknesses become exaggerated precisely because she is not. It would be easy and convenient to sweep this matter under the rug by claiming that Miss Garro is an unreliable informant since she is emotional, opinionated, and "artistic." I have been affected at times by that temptation, myself. No American official, however, knows her better than I do. On the basis of the facts that I have presented, I believe that, on balance, the matter warrants further investigation.

13. Finally, the record should show that a representative of a major American publication has at least some knowledge of this story.

C Thomas

Charles William Thomas
July 25, 1969